Historical and architectual

(Editor's Note: This article is a continuation of the history of present-day Carbondale City Hall that was published in last week's issue of the NEWS.)

By S. ROBERT POWELL

ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

Carbondale's present-day city hall is an excellent example of a Romanesque Revival building. It was designed by Truman I. Lacey of Binghamton, New York, and erected under his direction by W. D. Stevens of Binghamton, and George H. Tryon of Carbondale, in the period 1892-1894.

Although it has not yet been determined if Truman I. Lacey studied directly with Henry Hobson Richardson, it is clear from the design of Carbondale city hall that Lacey so whole heartedly adopted the architectural precepts of Richardson, one of the most important architects in America during the final decades of the nineteenth century, that Carbondale city hall might easily be mistaken for one of the building designed by Richardson himself.

All of the following qualities of the building are characteristics of the Richardsonian Romanesque style of building: a beautifully proportioned and monumental whole that is perfectly situated in space; masonry construction; an asymmetrical and varied facade; a massive square corner tower plus turrets, gables, and dormers; a massive sense of walls; a repetitive use of Romanesque arches throughout; a massive half-circle entrance arch; a richly textured surface.

Carbondale City Hall is, therefore, a highly important building in the history of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania and nineteenth-century America. It is important on the state and local levels not only because of the fact that it was designed by a local architect and constructed by local builders, but also because of the fact that it is constructed of Pennsylvania-made brick and Pennsylvania bluestone.

The city hall is important on the national level for two reasons: 1) It is an excellent example of a building in the Romanesque Revival style, a nationally important style of building during the final decades of the nineteenth century; 2) It possesses a very high degree of integrity: Carbondale City Hall appears today as it did when it was completed in 1894, its wholeness has not been impaired in any way.

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

Since 1869, Carbondale City Hall has been intimately connected with the executive, legislative and judicial history of Carbondale. It is, therefore, a highly important building in the history of Carbondale.

The two-story wing at the back of the structure was formerly an autonomous building: the brick court house that was erected immediately following the fire on February 14, 1869, in which Carbondale's first court house was burned to the ground. When Truman I. Lacey designed the present-day city hall, he incorporated the brick Court House that was situated on the lot where the city hall now stands into his design for present-day Carbondale City Hall.

The brick Court House that was incorporated by Lacey into his 1892-1894 city hall served a highly important function not only in the history of the city, but also in the history of northeastern Pennsylvania. From 1869 to 1894, it housed the executive and legislative branches of the city government. From 1869 to December 31, 1875, in addition, it housed one of the earliest judicial bodies established in northeastern Pennsylvania: the Carbondale City Court.

This court, established by the city charter, was styled the recorder's court and was presided over by the president judge of the judicial district sitting as recorder, assisted by the mayor and any alderman that might be present. This court had concurrent jurisdiction with the county courts, except in oyer and terminer cases and in cases belonging to the orphan's court. Its jurisdiction extended at times over Fell, Carbondale, Blakely and Greenfield Townships. By the operation of the constitution of 1873, the mayor's court was abolished on December 31, 1875. The importance of the two-story wing at the back of the present-day city hall is, therefore, great.

The importance of city hall in the history of Carbondale and the history of northeastern Pennsylvania is further underlined by the fact that portions of Lacey's 1892-1894 City Hall served as the Carbondale Post Office, town meeting hall, and concert hall. In addition, the offices of leading businesses and professional men and women in the history of Carbondale and the offices of important local societies and clubs (the Lackawanna Club, the Lackawanna Medical Society) were, at one time, located in the building.

IMPORTANCE IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Carbondale City Hall is not only an embodiment in brick and bluestone of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture it is, at the same time, an embodiment in brick and bluestone of the values and beliefs of late nineteenth century America.

What are some of the values and beliefs that are incarnated in Carbondale City Hall?

The following can be named: a high regard for materials and principles of